THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. October 8, 1937 Heshvan 3, 5698 No. 11.

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By Ira Eisenstein

A FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT ON YIDDISHISM

By Abraham G. Duker

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WHAT DOES RECONSTRUCTIONISM STAND FOR?

1. The reestablishment in Palestine of a homeland, not only for the Jews but for Jewish life and culture. As a civilization, Judaism requires at least one place in the world where it may be the primary civilization for its members.

2. The establishment in America of community organizations. Reconstructionism maintains that the present chaotic state of Jewish organization is doing as much as any single factor to drive Jews away from Jewish life. Community organization is essential because it alone can bring into reality the idea that there is a place in Jewish life for any Jew, no matter what his interests may be, so long as he believes that Jewish life should be preserved and advanced. Community organization is essential, furthermore, because it alone reckons with Jewish life in its totality and recognizes the truth that no one organ of the body can function properly unless all the others are equally healthy.

3. Education. Reconstructionism maintains that Jewish education must cease to be mere training in ritual or in catechism. The education of the whole child, which is the motto of all progressive educators, must be applied, so to train the child's habits of thinking and acting that he will be enabled to take his place in the Jewish community as an intelligent and well-informed individual, and that he will be enabled further to meet the challenge of outward antagonism with dignity and serenity.

3. Religion. Reconstructionism maintains that the Jewish religion is, in fact, the highest expression of a civilization. No civilizaton known to us has ever been without its religion. Our task today is to reinterpret ancient concepts in terms of modern thought and conditions and to make them relevant once more to the realities of our generation. Creative talent must be applied to religion as to all other aspects of life. Religion must cease to be merely the preservation of ancient dicta and rites. It must become itself a live and developing force.

5. Reconstructionism maintains that greater emphasis must be made in our day upon the esthetic possibilities in Jewish life. Art, music, the drama, literature and the dance, all have their functions to perform in the life of any civilized group. Among those who are repelled by Judaism a large number are undoubtedly repelled by the lack of beauty and of creative expression in Jewish life. A live people creates art, and art, in turn, brings new life and zest into any social group.

6. The Cooperative Society. Reconstructionism maintains that Jewish life in the long run will depend for its very existence upon the establishment of an order of society which is based upon cooperation rather than competition. The present economic order leads to war, poverty and insecurity. When such conditions prevail, the life of no minority group is safe. Nor can its people or even the members of the majority find the time or the mind to cultivate those aspects of their lives for which they are in fact struggling.

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We announce with pleasure the addition of Dr. Mortimer J. Cohen to the Editorial Board.

EDITORIALS

Prerequisites in Plans For Palestine's Future

THE nineteenth Zionist Congress, held at Zurich, Switzerland this past summer, will probably go down in history as one of the most momentous since the Uganda proposal split the Zionist world. The delegates were faced with a Royal Commission report that sought to revolutionize the status of Palestine, an Arab world which had not yet retreated one inch from its intransigent stand, a driven and land-starved population of Jews in Europe clamoring for immigration certificates, and a precarious economic and political situation in Palestine caused by the state of suspended animation resulting from the whole complex of recent events. These were not comfortable circumstances under which to meet, and when all the factors of realpolitik are taken into consideration, the interested Jewish observer comes to the inevitable conclusion that the delegates took the only road left open to them. They granted their Executive power to ascertain "the precise terms of His Majesty's Government for the proposed establishment of the Jewish State." In these negotiations, the Executive was empowered to commit neither itself nor the Zionist Organization to the specific proposals made in the Commission's report.

The Agency meeting that followed requested the Government to "convene a conference of Jews and Arabs for exploring the possibilities of making a peaceful settlement between Jews and Arabs in an undivided Palestine on the basis of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate." Thus, without rushing into a scheme that would have lasting effect upon the upbuilding of Palestine, or on the other hand rejecting outright the "suggestions" of the Commission, the Zionist leadership paved the way for a bargaining session in which the Jewish people will attempt to salvage as much and yield as little as poossible. No one could have expected them to do otherwise.

Some months will undoubtedly go by before a new Commission is appointed to bring the Jews and Arabs together to discuss their common problem, assuming, of course, that the Arabs will consent to such a meeting altogether. In the meantime, the Jewish world has an opportunity to give thought and study to this entire question. In a sense, this is good. Too often in the last generation or two have the Jews had to face immediate decisions without long and patient previous

consideration. Now is the time for our best minds to prepare themselves for shouldering a responsibility unprecedented, perhaps, in centuries. Not since the beginning of the Emancipation has the Jewish people stood, as it stands today, upon the crossroads of its career.

We should like to suggest at this time a number of propositions which we regard to be fundamental to any consideration of the problem. In our opinion, this generation of Jews should subscribe to these propositions as indispensable guides when they give thought to the future of our people in Palestine. Firstly, we feel that we must reaffirm the principle that the Jewish people has a right to settle in any part of historic Palestine on an autonomous basis. Much of the debate at the Congress was the result of a struggle between those who recognized the imperative needs of the Jews of Poland, Germany, and other lands of oppression, on the one hand, and on the other, those who took the long range view of Jewish aspiration. The latter represented the Zionists of those lands in which sharp anti-Semitic activities have not reached menacing proportions, and perhaps, because of that fact, they were better able to view the problem in the larger perspective. They realized that the *whole* of the Jewish people is involved in this crisis even though certain sectors of the nation are in particularly bitter and tragic need. We believe that our leaders as well as the rank and file of our people must do their utmost to remember that they are the trustees for the Jews of the future, and even at the risk of committing apparent cruelty, that they dare not barter away for all time the moral right of the Jewish people to their historic land.

Second, whatever eventuates in Palestine, the question of peace with the Arabs will still have to be met, and will require a vigorous and intelligent program. Some Jews seem to think that the establishment of a Jewish state will automatically lead to the establishment of peaceful relations with the Arab people. On the contrary, the Arab problem will be intensified. At present, the Arabs can blame the British for what they believe to be the wrongs against themselves. In a Jewish state, the Jews will become the direct objects of Arab discontent. If, on the other hand, there are those who contemplate the use of force in dealing with the question, they court tragedy for Israel. The force that failed against the Jews in other lands will fail against the Arabs, with this difference: the Jews in the *galut* will suffer the more for the intolerance of Palestine Jewry. No, the friendship and cooperation of the Arab masses must occupy a place of primacy in all our plans for the future.

Third: world Jewry must prepare itself to redouble its efforts on behalf of the upbuilding, no matter which way the political winds blow. We in the *galut* must not think of terminating our support. Independence will not mean the end of Palestine's need for our help. Land purchase and settlement must go on with renewed vigor; the redemption of "captive" Jews must be carried forward without interruption. American Jewry in particular must realize that if Britain is trying to wash its hands of responsibility, our responsibility has just begun.

If we bear these three propositions clearly in mind, the Jewish people will be able to proceed upon its historic enterprise with undaunted courage, and will be able to look forward with high confidence to the time when this crisis in its history will seem, like former crises, a mere incident in the brave career of Israel.

A Time To Be Cynical

WITH two undeclared wars being fiercely waged, one in Europe and one in Asia, the prospect of a world war in which we, too, will eventually be engulfed forces itself on our attention. We

do not like the prospect. The American people remembers how it was betrayed into fighting a war to end war, which resulted in a peace that nurtured the seeds of future wars; a war to make the world safe for democracy, which resulted in the triumph of dictatorships. We do not want to be involved in another such conflict, but that is no guarantee that we shall be able to keep out. We should remember that Woodrow Wilson was elected for a second term of office on the slogan, "He kept us out of war." Despite our desire to stay aloof from the conflict, we were drawn into it because both our interests and our convictions were not neutral but were definitely engaged on one side of the war. Defeat of the countries allied against Germany would have meant economic collapse for the United States and the triumph of militarism and autocracy.

The same forces that drew us into the world war are operative now and the more earnest we are in desiring peace, the more it behooves us to be on our guard against these forces. The war in the Far East is especially menacing to our continued neutrality. Already there has been a marked increase in our trade, particularly with China; and American capital in China has already been making clamorous demands for protection and urging the President to show "guts." The mere invocation of the neutrality laws will not keep us from economic involvement in the struggle that is going on, but will only compel our commerce with belligerents to take devious courses via neutral powers. But commercial interests alone would never suffice to draw us into war. We are not so heartless that we are prepared to sacrifice our children to Moloch for the sake of economic prosperity. Our real danger, now as before the world war is that the interests that would profit by our participation in the war, both those of Americans and of foreigners, will be able to beguile us with plausible idealistic reasons for joining it.

The outlines of the idealistic propaganda designed to draw us into the conflict are already becoming apparent. They bear a remarkable family resemblance to the arguments for which we fell in 1916. We are told that Italy, Germany and Japan are treaty-violating agressors and that all true lovers of peace must stand by the sacredness of international covenants and unite against aggressors. Is this not reminiscent of the talk of Germany's "rape of Belgium" and her treatment of the Belgian neutrality treaty as a "scrap of paper?" We are told that this is a war of ideologies, that the world must choose between Fascism and Democracy (now that Russia is allied in interest with Great Britain and France, the danger of communist dictatorship is no longer being flaunted). Substitute the word "militarism" for Fascism, a term by no means its antonym, and you have the old slogan, the old appeal to crush militarism that the world may be safe for democracy. We may expect any day to be told that, so long as there is Fascism there can be no peace, that therefore, a war to end Fascism is a war to end war.

What makes it hard to resist such slogans is that they contain a great measure of truth. We are not neutral in our sympathies in the present undeclared warfare. We do abhor military aggression and fascist dictatorship and do recognize in Fascism a menace to world-peace. We even believe in collective security and the obligation of nations to assume responsibility for suppressing any disturbance of the international accord. But— —

There is a *non-sequitur* to the conclusion that propagandists would have us infer from these arguments, the conclusion that, therefore, America should join the war against the fascist powers. Can Fascism be suppressed by military means? The world war did inflict a crushing defeat on "Prussian Militarism," but today it is reincarnated in Nazism. If we inflict military defeat on Nazism, we make martyrs of the Nazis and insure the re-

incarnation of Nazism in some other aggressive movement to compensate the German ego for humiliations inflicted upon it. But that is not all. Our entering into a war would involve the conferring of virtually dictatorial powers on the President and the practical suspension of our Bill of Rights, the pride of our American Democracy. In war-time, even democracies turn autocratic. Can we be so sure that they will revert to democratic procedures after the war is over? Italy and Japan were our allies in the war to make the world safe for democracy. Have we nothing to learn from their apostasy to militarism and Fascism? True it is that the eventual hope of a peaceful world lies in collective security and the sanctity of international law. But collective security can only be invoked by an international authority which sets the interests of humanity as a whole above those of any nation. The collective sanctions of the League were only invoked by the powers opposed to Fascism when they found it expedient for their own interests. We do not advance the cause of justice by preserving the *status quo* in the interest of the nations that have against the nations that have not.

We must therefore beware of idealistic slogans that would lure us into the present conflicts. When Kohelet declared that there was a time for everything, he should have added to his list of things that have their proper time a time for idealism and a time for cynicism. The time for idealism is when, in peace and security men are complacently pursuing their material interests in callous disregard of human ideals of liberty, justice and brotherly love. The time for cynicism is when, the social order having broken down under the strain of accumulated wrong all sorts of ideals are invoked to induce men to sacrifice themselves in behalf of one interested party against another. It is well then to remember the cynic's definition of a patriot as "a man who is always ready to sacrifice your life for his country."

Reformism Reforms Itself

OBSCURED by the ominous international situation, overshadowed by events in and centering about Palestine, the annual convocation of the Central Conference of American Rabbis held last May still remains an important event in the lives of American Jews. The keynote of the assembly of Reformist rabbis was struck by Dr. Felix A. Levy, president of the Conference, who asserted in his presidential message that "our reformation days are over" and admitted frankly that the program he advocated was "an approach to Conservatism."

The swing of Reformist Judaism toward traditionalism comes as a surprise only to those who have been blind to the forces at work in American Jewry. For some time there has been profound discontent among Reformists, rabbis and laymen alike, with an ideology that reduced Judaism to a theological communion, with a system of ritual practice so tenuous as to be insubstantial, with an official attitude of indifference to the Hebrew tongue and with a position, first of open hostility and more recently of reserved sympathy for Zionist aspirations. The restlessness of the Reformist Jew has become increasingly vocal, finding voice in the open statements of far-seeing rabbis and in the concern of laymen as they noted the inability of their philosophy and system to provide a rich, meaningful, loyalty-evoking Jewish life. The laymen's rebellion against orthodox Reformism came into the open at the last convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which went on record as advocating the restoration of a number of traditional practices.

The man in the pew could not be expected to see his problem in its deeper ideological aspects. He turned naturally to the outer shell of it, seeking to solve it by modifying externalities. The rabbis too in their own assembly devoted considerable attention to outer forms, con-

cerning themselves with an attempt to enlarge and regularize ritual observance, to give their assistance to a positive solution of the Palestinian problem. Yet, as theorists, they knew that, valuable as these measures might be, they were not enough in themselves. With vigor and courage they turned also to the problem of a more adequate philosophy for Jewish life.

For over half a century, Reformist Judaism has given at least lip allegiance to the Pittsburgh platform adopted in 1885. In the light of that pronouncement, Judaism was construed as a monotheistic creed, the Jews forming a religious communion whose purpose it was to disseminate that belief and the morality corollary to it. Such a rationale of Judaism has long been found both incapable of logical scrutiny and contrary to the facts of Jewish existence. What was worse, the program which flowed from it led inevitably to the truncating of Jewish life and the excision from it of elements most essential to its vigor and meaningfulness.

The Reformist rabbis have at last abandoned this ideology, turning their attention to the evolvement of another to take its place. It was natural that there be intense disagreement both over the revolutionary step and also over the character of the new pronouncement. Nor can the supplanting platform be regarded as yet as anything but tentative. And yet those of us who seek a full, richer Judaism take courage from its outlines as they emerge into visibility. For the new pronouncement, recognizing as it should the importance of religion in Jewish life, insists nonetheless on the legitimacy of non-theological Jewish interests. It stresses Jewish cultural values, the Hebrew language and traditional ritual. It is sympathetic to the rebuilding of Palestine.

In only one direction is it inadequate. It lacks a central unifying concept to integrate the various aspects of the Jewish life it advocates. For, whatever may have been the failings of the old pronouncement, it was clear, even if mistaken, in its definition of Judaism as a religion. Such precision the new platform lacks. In attempting to describe the non-theological areas of Judaism, it hesitates over the word "tradition," skirts the word "culture" and avoids the word "civilization." We of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST believe that our program contains the ideal, unifying concept in the phrase "religious civilization." We call the attention of Reformist rabbis to it, not out of a childish desire for vindication but as a warning against a mistake which will vitiate much of the value of the Reformist pronouncement when it takes final form. For without some integrating idea, the areas of Jewish life which the Reformist rabbis would cultivate must be isolated and unrelated to each other and confusing to the individual Jew who will fail to see the interpenetration of all aspects of Jewish effort. To those who lead in the reformation of Reformism: our most earnest hopes that they will not content themselves with steps in the right direction but will insist that each move be motivated by a theory which binds the whole into logical and practical unity.

In any event, there is encouragement in this self-transformation of Reformism. And hope as well. For what is happening to Reformism gives happy augury of the ultimate development among American Jews of normative Judaism, proceeding from a consensus of opinion in theory to concerted uniform efforts in practice.

What Is the Jewish Problem*

By Ira Eisenstein

THE Jewish problem may be divided into two parts, the external problem and the internal problem. The external problem deals with the relation of the Jews to the peoples of the world. The internal problem deals with the relation of Jews to their fellow-Jews and to their social, intellectual and religious life as it is lived within the framework of the Jewish community.

I.
The External Problem

The external problem of the Jewish people did not arise in our generation. It is a problem that has faced the Jews in the world ever since their first major migrations out of Palestine in the sixth century before the Common Era. The problem arose as a result of their insistence upon living as a nation outside the land which gave them birth.

The immediate past of most American Jews leads us back to the European continent where, for centuries, the relation of the Jews to the non-Jewish world had achieved a certain stability. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews regarded themselves as a nation in exile, and were compelled to live as strangers in strange lands quite definitely at the mercy of the hosts. The Christian world regarded Jews also as a nation in exile, and interpreted their peculiar status as a result of their persistent and seemingly irrational refusal to accept Jesus as the Christ. The dispersion was therefore a punishment which could be expiated only by conversion to the true faith.

In the Middle Ages, Jews could not become citizens of the various states. The State-Church was so constituted that only those within the Church could enjoy the benefits of citizenship. The identity of Church and State determined also the character of the economic life, and only those who were citizens in good standing could enjoy membership in the various workers' guilds. Ownership of land was limited to Christians, and Jews were consequently condemned to make their livelihood by means of trade or money-lending; and these means were not always secure. The precariousness of Jewish existence throughout the Middle Ages, however, gives no indication of the extent to which their status was specific and unmistakable.

So far as the Christian world was concerned, the Jews were a problem only in that they continued to insist upon rejecting the Saviour. But even this refusal was in certain quarters interpreted not as a problem at all, but rather as a permanent and necessary condition. The Catholic Church rationalized Jewish obstinacy into a Doctrine. Jews, they said, must always be with us to remind us of the Passion. To the European Catholic world, therefore, the Jews were not really a problem. To themselves the Jews were also not a problem because they had a complete rationale for their own situation and for everything that befell them. They knew perfectly well that despite their persecutions and their insecurities, an eternal life of serenity and security awaited them in the world to come. Having this basic system of thought upon which to fall back, no amount of adverse experience could shake their absolute faith in the rationality and intelligibility of their career as a people. Quite the contrary, each fresh reversal of good fortune was additional testimony to the inevitability of their ultimate reward.

With the Emancipation which took place at the close of the eighteenth and

*A restatement of this question was deemed advisable at the beginning of the new publication season so that readers may be aware of the analysis on the basis of which the Reconstructionist program is offered.—Ed.

the beginning of the nineteenth century, equality of citizenship, which had been kept from Jews for centuries, was now to be extended to them. They were to take their places as free and equal individuals in their respective states, with the rights to vote, to hold office, to receive the most modern and enlightened education, to practice the professions, and to engage in the commercial life of the general society. The era of reason and goodwill, the era of pure democracy, equality and fraternity was supposed to put an end to the hostility between the non-Jewish and the Jewish world. The prejudices and bigotries of the Dark Ages were to have been forgotten, and all men were now to be treated as equals.

Unfortunately, the very economic and political forces that gave rise to the Emancipation of the Jews were to prove the basic causes of a renewed and much intensified problem. The economic and political forces that brought emancipation to the Jews consisted, briefly, in the rise of the modern national states, as a result of the commercial and industrial revolution, and the rise of capitalist economy. The nature of the new economy made economically unified and sovereign states indispensable, and since these new states in this rising and expanding industrialism were to be founded upon the principles of economic and political equality, it was inevitable that the Jews should be swept in upon this wave of liberalism.

But certain basic difficulties in the economic system created periodically a series of cataclysmic reverses, and erstwhile liberals began to question whether it had been wise to admit everyone equally into the arena of the economic life. There was a deep and abiding faith in the system of laissez faire economics which was so powerful that the European minds could not imagine it to be fallacious, just as they could not conceive of basic fallacies in the Newtonian mechanics. Rather than question the validity of their system, they resorted to the use of the scapegoat, and, intellectually and emotionally speaking, reverted to the superstitions of an earlier day.

The Jews had been the objects of persecution for centuries before, and it was only natural that they should once again play the part of the scapegoat. To such an extent have the Jews been identified with the failure of current economy that in countries like Germany, Rumania and Italy the word Jew has almost ceased to have any connection with the living, real people who bear the name, but rather symbolizes all that the dominant nation deems evil and reprehensible. The word has practically taken the place of the medieval anti-Christ.

In such a situation, the external problem confronting the Jews is a desperate one. The ideals of the Emancipation seem to be definitely on the wane, even in those countries which are still listed among the democratic lands. The rise of reaction is bound ultimately to spell the withdrawal of rights from all persecuted minorities, especially the Jews. What shall be done? Shall the Jews sit tight, act respectably, obey the law, and hope to win the favor, or rather to avoid the fury, of the angry mobs? Shall they prepare now for migrations to far-off and God-forsaken places which no other peoples would inhabit? Shall they turn their eyes to Palestine as the one and only solution of their physical problem? Shall they consider the invitation of the Soviet Union which has invited them to populate the territory known as Biro-Bidjan? Shall they stay behind and fight it through, identifying their cause with the cause of all the downtrodden and oppressed?

This is the problem which Jews must face. It is a problem that can be understood in the simplest terms of food and shelter and physical safety. There is, however, another aspect of the external problem which involves also to a certain extent an aspect of the internal problem, and that is the status of the Jewish group within the larger population. Granted for the moment that the fundamental

necessities of existence are duly provided, shall the Jews regard themselves, as previously, as a nation in exile? Shall they regard themsevles as a religious community with no geographical loyalties of any sort except the one which is directed to their native soil? Shall the Jews consider themselves national minorities and insist upon internal cultural and social autonomy, or should they lose their identity altogether as a group and become absorbed into the larger body of human beings who constitute their larger society?

These are some of the vital questions which go to make up the Jewish problem, and these latter questions derive their vitality from the first series of problems which deal with the basic human necessities of life for Jews, because in the minds of many the answers to one series of questions will determine the answers to the other. Some maintain that Jews can never expect to achieve political and economic equality unless they are prepared to assimilate. Others insist, quite to the contrary, that the very determination of the Jews to continue their distinctive existence is in itself a protest against that regimentation which is associated with inequality and oppression. But no Jew, whether he regards himself as a Jew or not, no Jew who is known as a Jew and identified by the world as a Jew, can afford to ignore this whole set of external problems, as seen from the Jewish point of view.

The external problem from the non-Jewish viewpoint is to a great extent illusory. Some non-Jews consider the Jews a problem because they believe the Jews constitute an international secret conspiracy to control the world. Some non-Jews regard the Jews as a problem because they are still convinced that the Jews are a menace to Christian children at Easter time. We cannot deal with such fears seriously at this time. Those fears which may be treated seriously are the fears of non-Jewish nationalists who in all sincerity maintain that a nation is constantly endangered by the presence of an unassimilable element. So long as there is a group which maintains its distinctive life despite all odds, there is always the danger that in the event of crises that group will maintain a loyalty to its members that will transcend their loyalty to the State or to the larger nation. Certain Protestant Christians in America regard the Jewish problem as one of retarded assimilation. They have not thought through the problem very clearly, to be sure, as witness the fact that they are themselves reluctant to assist the Jews in this process. No intelligent Jew, however, can offord to ignore these aspects of the problem as well, for an intelligent approach to Jewish life requires that Jews understand not only the currents of thought that stream through their own ranks but those that stream through the ranks of the non-Jewish world when that world contemplates the Jewish problem.

II.

The Internal Problem

The uninitiated observer, judging from the activities of the most publicized Jewish organizations and by the emphases in the Jewish press, might arrive at the conclusion that the Jewish problem is exclusively an external one. Fighting anti-Semitism seems to be the only activity for which most Jews are known, and to which most Jewish organizations seem to be dedicated. The internal problem, however, is one which is in a sense more vital to Jews because it is that aspect of the Jewish problem over which Jews have some measure of control.

In the last analysis, the solution of the external problem lies not in the hands of the Jews themselves. For the most part, Jews are quite prepared to live at peace and in friendship with their non-Jewish neighbors. The hatred of the Jew is stimulated by non-Jews for non-Jews, and as a result of social and economic forces over which Jews have only an insignificant control. In the long run, therefore, the external Jewish problem is not a prob-

lem which Jews as such can do very much about. The internal problem, however, is entirely within their own jurisdiction.

What is the nature of this problem? Basically, it is the problem of conceiving clearly the character of Judaism. For the ancestors of the present generation of Jews, the character of Judaism was altogether clear. Judaism for them was the supernaturally revealed religion of the Jewish people, revealed to Moses, the Prophets and the Sages, transmitted from them through the ages as a complete, unchangeable and infallible way of life. Its center of gravity was in the world to come. The function of the Jews was to obey the commandments contained in the Written and Oral Torah, and thereby to gain admission into the life of eternal bliss. This Judaism was therefore authoritarian, supernatural and other-worldly. The Jew of today finds that as a result of the impact of Western thought and culture upon his concepts and attitudes, he can no longer accept this traditional view of Judaism. Authority has given way to the scientific and experimental method. Supernaturalism has yielded to the naturalism characteristic of the scientific and machine age, and otherworldliness has surrendered to a complete absorption in the here and the now, with only a fleeting thought given in moments of discouragement and doubt to the possibilities of an existence beyond the grave.

The result of this intellectual upheaval has been to cast doubts upon the very worthwhileness of Jewish traditions. The scientific study of religion, of history and of literature has undermined all the traditional acceptances regarding the infallibility of the authority of the Torah. The recent political developments have also served to integrate the Jew into the life of the larger society, and to lead him to depend for his self-fulfillment upon the instruments and institutions of the State rather than upon the Jewish community. Previously, the Jew depended for his very literacy upon the Jewish school and the Jewish cultural heritage. Today Jewish life struggles against a mounting charge of irrelevancy. Those who are still deeply attached to the Jewish past and are interested in creating a Jewish future are therefore faced with a two-fold problem: They must first re-create an intense interest in Jewish life as such, and, on the other hand, must substitute for the old authoritarian and supernatural content, new content which will be acceptable to modern Jews of the most critical kind, which must stir the imaginations and fire the enthusiasms of a new generation who are no longer propelled by the powerful forces of habit and momentum, and who must be won back to participation in Jewish life on the basis of the intrinsic merit of Judaism itself.

Numerous philosophies and programs have been offered to adjust Jewish life to the modern intellectual and social climate. One type of philosophy advocates the dissolution of Jewish life as such. It maintains that there is no genuine spontaneous need which Jews experience to be Jews, that all efforts to perpetuate Jewish life are types of artificial respiration which are both futile and undesirable.

The assimilationist sees no possibility in a distinctive Jewish contribution to the world, nor does he see the need of one. If Jews have any creative talent, they should not keep it isolated, but should rather merge it with the creative talents of other peoples and be assured that the end product will be superior for such amalgamation with other strains. The assimilationist is quite willing to grant that Jews have made some contribution in the past, but he is unable to see why it is necessary to perpetuate a distinctive people in order that that contribution be perpetuated, any more than ancient Greek or Babylonian nations need be revived in order that the poets and philosophers of this civilization be remembered and appreciated.

Another type of approach to the problem is made by those who are known as Reformist Jews, who seek to adjust Juda-

ism to the modern world by means of stripping it of all nationalistic elements and reducing it to its simplest and highest terms of ethical monotheism. For them the internal problem may be solved by retaining only the Jewish form of worship, but in all other respects assimilating with the dominant civilization.

The Neo-Orthodox groups approach the internal problem from quite another angle. For them the maladjustment of Judaism to the times is not due to Judaism at all, but to the times, and they place the onus of responsibility for readjustment upon general society. Neo-Orthodoxy reaffirms its faith in authoritarianism, supernaturalism, and the infallibility of Jewish tradition.

Another category of solutions is the Zionist category. Jewish life, according to some, if it is to be lived at all, can be lived only in Palestine, and all Jews who are interested in being Jews must make up their minds that the diaspora must be rejected and repudiated. Other Zionists believe that Palestine, by becoming a cultural center for Jewry throughout the world, will effect the necessary revitalization to make Jews happy again to be Jews and to participate in Jewish cultural life. Other groups seek to solve the internal problem of Jews by means of cultural and social autonomy within the framework of minority rights. Such groups immediately, after the last war, succeeded in achieving such minority rights in several countries of Europe, and as a result maintained separate schools, press, courts, theatre, their own distinctive language and curriculum, without officially impairing their rights as citizens in the State which guaranteed these rights. American Jews have never taken seriously the suggestion of minority rights for themselves. But neither have they, on the other hand, clarified their fundamental status in relation to American life, and they have therefore never succeeded in answering satisfactorily a whole set of other questions for which solution must be found.

Shall the basic form of organization be the congregation? Shall it be the fraternal organization? The Zionist organization? The philanthropic organization? What shall be the relation of the Synagogue to the community center? What shall be the relation of one synagogue to another? What shall be the relation of the irreligious Jew to Jewish activity? How shall Jews be represented? Shall they continue to utilize the instrument of influential secret diplomacy, or shall they organize a democratically administered congress? How should such a congress be organized? Should it be affiliated with congresses in other lands as part of an international world congress? How shall Jewish philanthropy be organized? Should Jewish education be subsidized by the community as part of a philanthropic program, or should Jewish education be subsidized only by those who are interested in a particular kind of Jewish education for their own children? How shall Jews learn about themselves? Is it possible or desirable to establish scientific bureaus of Jewish social research so that Jews may be more intelligent about the precise facts of their lives and communities? What kind of Jewish press shall there be? What should it emphasize? What should its purpose be? Who shall subsidize it? In view of the vast discrepancies in economic level among Jews, how shall Jews overcome the almost inevitable tendency to depend for guidance upon the monied aristocracy? These are some of the problems which Jews face with regard to their organzation.

Another series of questions might be asked regarding Jewish education, such as: What shall be the emphasis in Jewish education? Shall it be upon the knowledge of the Hebrew language, or should children be taught the Jewish heritage in English? Shall they be taught to participate in Jewish life, or shall the stress be laid upon giving information regarding the past? Shall the Bible be taught as divine revelation, or shall it be

taught as a natural source of moral values? Should Jewish history be taught with the underlying bias that Jews are destined to eternal exile, or shall they be made to feel that Palestine is bound to put an end to the centuries' old wandering? Should children be taught to pray? Should children be taught about God? How shall they be enabled to reconcile traditional concepts with the teachings to which they are exposed in secular schools? Should Jewish religious schools attempt to delegate the task of teaching Hebrew to the public school authorities, or should Jews insist upon a strict dichotomy between the State and Jewish education?

How shall Zionism be taught? Shall it be presented as an attempt to find a place of refuge for persecuted Jews? Shall it be presented as an experiment in remaking the Jew both physically and spiritually? Shall Zionism be presented as an effort to establish Utopia? What attitude shall be cultivated regarding the Arabs? Regarding British imperialism? What is the effect, upon the character of the Jewish child, of any or all of these teachings?

Another set of questions might be asked regarding the more intimate internal life of the Jew. Shall he observe the Sabbath? How shall he observe it? Shall he retain Jewish dietary laws? How can Kashrut be regulated so that it will not involve shameful and scandalous profiteering? Should Jews be expected to carry on daily worship, to observe traditional rites and ceremonies? How can Jewish life in the home be made interesting, attractive and esthetic? What materials are available or could be available to help Jewish children express themselves through the arts and music?

There are endless questions that arise when the internal problem of Jewish life is contemplated, just as there would be and must be endless questions arising when the internal life of any social group is discussed. Paradoxically enough, most Jews are more concerned with the external problem than with the internal one, as citizens of a nation might be more interested in the foreign policy of the nation than in its internal life. Basically, the purpose of a foreign policy is to insure domestic security and the possibilities of the most complete internal life. The only real justification for concern with the Jewish foreign policy, so to speak, is that it may insure a full and rich life within. It should be clear, therefore, that without deprecating the value of concern with the external problem, exclusive concern with it must be regarded as shortsighted and incomplete. The Jewish problem should, therefore, no longer be regarded merely as that which deals only with the peace and goodwill between Jews and non-Jews. The Jewish problem is a far larger one than that, and whoever seeks to solve it must not overlook its two-fold character.

III.

Roads to Solution

When the Jewish problem is viewed in all its aspects, certain fundamental prerequisites for its solution become apparent.

1) No lasting solution to the Jewish problem can be conceived without the establishment of a social order based upon justice and peace. So long as there are inequality, poverty and more people who want to work than there are jobs to offer, then anti-Semitism will continue to be nurtured and Jews will continue to occupy themselves with measures of self-defense. When the element of competition between citizens is eliminated, the necessity will no longer exist for exploiting differences between races and ethnic groups, and when Jews no longer have to fight anti-Semitism they will be able to devote themselves to the cultivation of their inner life, to the advancement of their culture, and their civilization. In addition, those Jews who cannot conscientiously remain Jews will have the opportunity of seceding from the ranks and assimilating into other social groups. They will no longer be compelled by the

pressure of persecution to remain Jews against their will. This, in turn, will raise the common denominator of Jewish kinship, and hence the general tone of Jewish life itself.

2) No permanent solution to the problem can be conceived without the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Whatever vitality Jewish civilization will have will come from the renaissance of language, mores, culture, social institutions, which are given new impetus in Palestine. Already the results of a few years of intensive Jewish rebuilding are evident in the content of Jewish education, focal points of Jewish interest, and the new psychology of hope which Jews reflect. A civilization, like any other organism, cannot continue unchanging. It either grows or deteriorates. So long as Jewish life remained within the ghetto, Jewish civilization did not degenerate. Its growth was merely retarded. Now, when the protective shell of the ghetto has been removed, the pace of metabolism has increased and the process of degeneration challenges the process of growth. Palestine therefore is indispensable to any solution of the problem.

3) Jewish life must be organized on the basis of the broadest conception of Judaism. The very intellectual atmosphere of our day renders unanimity of opinion impossible, and conformity of thought undesirable. Jews must reconcile themselves hereafter to the inevitable diversity of belief and practice within Jewish life. In view of this new and unprecedented situation, a new approach must be taken to the whole problem of Jewish community life. New criteria of loyalty to Jewish life and new standards of excellence must be established, based not upon the acceptance of authoritative codes but upon the extent of participation in the attempts to solve group problems and to advance group welfare.

4) Jewish life will not become again the source of personal salvation to its members that it was generations ago unless it evolves a religious ideology consistent with the highest in modern thought and capable of eliciting the best in modern men. A modern Jewish religion demands continuity with the past without blind adherence to the tenets of the past. The new Jewish religion must be an outgrowth of the organic process of evolution.

These are the fundamental prerequisites for any solution of the Jewish problem. They imply nothing less than a complete reconstruction of the social and economic order, and the reconstruction of the Jewish social and intellectual life.

A Forthright Statement on Yiddishism

By Abraham G. Duker*

THE theoreticians of the Territorialist movement belong for the most part to the Yiddishist school. A rare exception is Ezekiel Kaufman who advocates the adoption of the Hebrew language as a substitute for religion, since he considers Hebrew the most powerful factor for the future survival of Jewry. It is thus natural for him to visualize Hebrew as the language of the Jewish community in its additional territorial center, or centers outside of Palestine.

The dual language theoreticians, usually labor Zionists, find it more difficult to furnish an easy solution. Granted that Hebrew is the language of Palestine and Yiddish is that of the diaspora, what will be the relation of both languages? Sup-

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pose German or Ladino speaking Jews are settled in some new territory, what basis is there for bestowing the Yiddish language upon them? The mother tongue argument which is the strongest weapon of the Yiddishist cannot be applied in this case. We can clearly see that the theoreticians of this school hesitate to follow their argument to its logical conclusion. They are tied down to compromise platforms adopted by conventions of political parties. An attempt to solve this problem is made by Rachel Feigenberg in the booklet* here under review. The outstanding thing about it is the open, candid and realistic presentation of the problem.

Negators of the diaspora base their arguments on two main assumptions: The first is the assumed impossibility of the Jews to survive in the diaspora because of anti-Semitism. The second is the inevitability of assimilation in the diaspora under a liberal or socialist regime. For this reason territorial concentration is suggested as the only way of Jewish survival. Feigenberg arrives at her point of view mainly because of the second reason. She is one of the few Yiddish writers who dare to assert that Yiddish, the mainstay of the diaspora Nationalists, is dying in the diaspora. Her argument is more telling since she does not discuss theories, but prefers to deal with real situations, as they appear to her.

Even in a country like Poland with a large concentration of Jews and in spite of the great pressure of anti-Semitism, Yiddish is losing out rapidly, according to her observations. It is not only a question of the great number of Jewish children who are attending Polish schools. The difficulty is traced by her to the dual secular cultural allegiance of the Jews in the diaspora. This is made more complicated by the psychological factor of inferiority complexes on the part of minority groups. A Jewish young man dare not address his object of affection in Yiddish. He does not hear often, "Ich lib dir" in the movies. The Polish version sounds more romantic, more knightly and certainly is heard more often from the stage or screen. The situation is no better in Lithuania. There, only eighteen years after the recognition of Lithuanian independence, a Jewish periodical is appearing in the Lithuanian language for the benefit of Jewish *intelligentsia* who do not want to read Yiddish. The Yiddish schools have almost completely lost out to the Hebrew and Lithuanian school system. The process of voluntary Hebraization on the part of youth is a very successful one. The situation is equally bad for the Yiddish language in Rumania.

Of even more importance in the eyes of the author is the state of Yiddish in the U.S.S.R. The Soviet experiment resulted in assimilation, immediate or ultimate. Feigenberg blames it largely on the attitude of the Jewish communists who have always been assimilationists and hostile to Jewish survival. Anything that has been done in the U.S.S.R. on behalf of Yiddish has been achieved in spite of, and not be cause of the desire of the Yevsektsia. The Russian Government was willing to grant to the Jews all inducements for the retention of their national identity, but the "Jewish" communists were averse to it.

The future of Yiddish seems to be gloomy in Palestine, too. In spite of the accusations of dictatorial Hebraism, the masses in Palestine seem to accept Hebraization willingly. Yiddish there is degenerating in the same way that it is in the United States. It is becoming a holy language for a small group of fanatical *intelligentsia* who do not use it in conversation with their own children. The language is continuously being jargonized to the lowest cultural level of the masses, which have still retained its use. As such, neither Yiddish letters nor newspapers in Palestine can ever be of a high cultural degree.

What then remains for Yiddish? Its

*Rachel Feigenberg: *Di Velt Vill Mir Zoln Zein Jidn* (The World Wants Us to Remain Jews), Warsaw, Farlag Farn Folk, 1936, 71 p.

only salvation is the territorial Yiddish center in Biro-Bidjan. Jewish cultural workers, especially writers, have to settle either in Biro-Bidjan or in Palestine immediately in order to create the territorial language center according to their own linguistic preferences. The diaspora is doomed. As for herself, the author has selected Palestine and Hebrew.

Opinions of this type are quite current now among Yiddish intellectuals. Most of them are afraid to voice them. The pressure of the "Yiddish Land" is too great. Rachel Feigenberg is expressing openly what others dare not mention only in private.

"A SONG FOR CHILDREN"

פזמון לתינוקות

By ZALMAN SCHNAIUR

Do you know of the magic land
On Ararat so high?
There, raindrops are of wine, and hail
Brings cookies from the sky.
The hills are made of sugar lumps,
The trees are gingerbread;
Between them, milky fountains hum,
And streams of sweet oil spread.

And do you know who dwells up there,
Whom not a soul has seen?
A prince, with clothes of rainbow hue
And crown of stars that gleam.
He eats but purest honeydrops,
He drinks but nectar sweet;
In tiny bowls of shining wax,
Twelve bees serve him this treat.

Do you know what this little king
Prefers to do at play?
With silver pot and golden spoon
He cooks and roasts each day.
Upon an oven made of glass
As clear as crystal rare,
He places heaps of precious gems
And lets them simmer there.

Do you know whom our charming prince
Has gathered to his table?
Great peacocks, birds of brilliant hue,
And golden swans of fable.
They gently rest in saffron fields
Then rise and wings unfurl;
And ere they fly, they peck, peck, peck
A topaz, emerald, pearl.

(Translation from Hebrew by a student in adult Hebrew classes at Temple Israel, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.)